

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JEREMIAH O'LEARY FRONT PAGE BYLINER
WASHINGTON STAR WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1 HEADED "NEW MEXICAN
PRESIDENT EXPECTED TO STEER CLOSER TO CENTER, U.S."

2. MEXICO CITY - THE INAUGURATION TODAY OF JOSE LOPEZ
PORTILLO AS MEXICO'S 60TH PRESIDENT SIGNALS A CLEAR RETURN
TO THE POLITICAL CENTER AND IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE
UNITED STATES OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS.

3. THE IMPORTANCE THAT WASHINGTON ATTACHES TO THE CHANGE
OF GOVERNMENT IN MEXICO IS UNDERLINED BY THE PRESTIGIOUS
AMERICAN OFFICIAL DELEGATION HEADED BY SECRETARY OF STATE
HENRY A- KISSINGER. THE DELEGATION ALSO INCLUDES MRS.
KISSINGER; ROSALYNN CARTER, WIFE OF PRESIDENT-ELECT JIMMY
CARTER; LADYBIRD JOHNSON, WIDOW OF PRESIDENT LYNDON B.
JOHNSON, WHO HAD ALWAYS BEEN POPULAR WITH THE MEXICANS, AND
OTHER STATE DEPARTMENT AND CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

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4. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE MEXICAN CAPITAL IS ONE OF EAGER-

NESS FOR THE NEW LOPEZ PORTILLO ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE CHARGE AND GET MOVING TO DISPEL THE WIDESPREAD SENSE OF

UNREST CREATED IN RECENT WEEKS BY OUTGOING PRESIDENT LUIS ECHEVERRIA.

5. MEXICO HAS BEEN IN DEEP ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TURMOIL SINCE ECHEVERRIA DEVALUED THE PESO FROM 8 CENTS TO SLIGHTLY LESS THAN A NICKEL AND THEN PERMITTED LANDLESS PEASANTS IN THE NORTH TO SEIZE LARGE TRACTS OF RICH FARMLAND FROM THEIR OWNERS. THIS UNREST WAS ACCENTUATED ON THE EVE OF THE INAUGURATION WHEN FIVE BOMB BLASTS SHOOK VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CAPITAL.

6. JUST AS THE CARTER TRANSITION PERIOD IN THE UNITED STATES IS ONE OF WILD GUESSING AND HIGH UNCERTAINTY, THE MEXICAN TRANSITION HAS BEEN THE SAME. MUCH OF THAT GUESSWORK ENDED LAST NIGHT WHEN LOPEZ PORTILLO'S CABINET CHOICES WERE MADE PUBLIC ON NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION.

7. AS IN WASHINGTON ALSO, THERE WILL BE A HONEYMOON PERIOD OF UNDEFINED DURATION FOR THE NEW PRESIDENT.

8. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DISILLUSIONED BY ECHEVERRIA'S OPEN COURTSHIP OF THE THIRD WORLD AND THE POLITICAL LEFT, AS WELL AS THE SHOCK OF THE LAND SEIZURES AND THE DEVALUATION OF THE CURRENCY, ARE UNABASHEDLY HAILING LOPEZ PORTILLO AS A MAN WHO WILL RESTORE NORMALCY AND STABILITY.

9. THE DIFFERENCE MAY WELL BE AS MUCH A MATTER OF STYLE AS OF POLICY.

10. PERCEPTIVE MEXICANS READILY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE 56-YEAR OLD NEW PRESIDENT HAS INHERITED A MESS WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE TO UNTANGLE OVERNIGHT.

11. ECHEVERRIA PROBABLY DID HIM A FAVOR BY DEVALUING THE PESO BUT ECHEVERRIA PROBABLY OPENED A PANDORA'S BOX FOR HIS SUCCESSOR BY SUPPORTING THE LAND SEIZURES IN SONORA AND SINALOA STATES. LOPEZ PORTILLO FROM NOW ON WILL BE A UNCLASSIFIED

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MAN ON A TIGHTROPE FACING THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF LAND IN A COUNTRY WITH AN EXPLODING POPULATION AND ALMOST NO AVAILABLE ARABLE LAND TO SATISFY A LAND HUNGER OF THE POOR FARMERS.

12. ECHEVERRIA'S ACTIONS WERE DESIGNED TO MAKE HIM A PLACE IN HISTORY JUST AS HIS PREDECESSOR, GUSTAVO DIAZ ORDAZ, DID BY CONSTRUCTING THE EFFICIENT METRO SUBWAY SYSTEM.

ECHEVERRIA ALSO WAS PLAYING UP TO THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES IN HOPES THAT HE WILL BE ELECTED SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

13. BUT LOPEZ PORTILLO IS ALREADY PROJECTING THE IMAGE OF A MAN WHO IS WELL AWARE OF WORLD ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES AND WHO WILL NOT INDULGE IN THE KIND OF GRANDSTANDING WITH THE MEXICAN COMMON MAN THAT WAS ECHEVERRIA'S TRADEMARK.

14. RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES BECAME CONSIDERABLY STRAINED IN THE SECOND HALF OF ECHEVERRIA'S TERM ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS THE MATTER OF THE PRISONERS EACH COUNTRY HAS IN JAILS OF THE OTHER.

15. ECHEVERRIA INCREASINGLY IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH THE FAR LEFT IN CUBA AND MARXIST CHILE BEFORE THE 1973 COUP. BUT LOPEZ PORTILLO SHOWS EVERY SIGN OF WANTING CLOSER IDENTIFICATION WITH THE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES AND THE UNITED STATES TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT AND TRADE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF STABILITY AND GENERALLY TO OPERATE IN MUCH CLOSER COOPERATION WITH WASHINGTON.

16. BUSINESSMEN ALREADY ARE HAILING LOPEZ PORTILLO'S DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST "MORDIDA," LITERALLY "THE BITE." MORDIDA IS THE PERCENTAGE RAKEOFF FOR ACCOMPLISHING ALMOST ANY TYPE OF BUSINESS HERE AND HAS BECOME COMMONPLACE. LOPEZ PORTILLO SAID IN HIS CAMPAIGN THAT HE WOULD PUT AN END TO THE PRACTICE BECAUSE, IN EFFECT, MEXICANS WOULD BE DEVOURING THEMSELVES.

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17. NONE OF THIS MEANS THAT LOPEZ PORTILLO WILL BECOME A PATSY FOR U.S. INTERESTS. A MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT IS THAT HE WILL NOT MAKE UNNECESSARY WAVES IN THE COMPLEX RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NEIGHBOR NATIONS. IT IS STILL A FACT OF LIFE THAT NO MEXICAN PRESIDENT CAN AFFORD TO SEEM TOO SNUG WITH THE AMERICANS BECAUSE NO ONE HERE HAS FORGOTTEN THE LOSS OF TEXAS AND WHAT IS NOW MOST OF THE AMERICAN WEST. THE LOST BATTLE BETWEEN THE U.S. MARINES AND THE BOY CADET HEROES OF CHAPULTEPEC ALSO IS ENGRAVED IN THE NATIONAL MEMORY.

18. AND THERE ARE STILL TWO PLACES NO MEXICAN PRESIDENT CAN EVER BE SEEN: THE AMERICAN EMBASSY OR A CATHOLIC CHURCH. THIS HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE SAYING, "PITY POOR MEXICO, SO FAR FROM GOD, SO CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES."

19. BUT LOPEZ PORTILLO BY ALL ACCOUNTS IS A VERY PRACTICAL MAN. HE KNOWS THAT MEXICO'S \$2 BILLION NEGATIVE BALANCE OF TRADE WITH THE UNITED STATES CAN ONLY BE OFFSET BY TOURISM AND INVESTMENT FROM THAT POWERFUL NEIGHBOR.

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HE PROBABLY NEVER WOULD HAVE ANTAGONIZED AMERICAN JEWS, SO IMPORTANT TO TOURISM, BY VOTING AGAINST ISRAEL IN THE UNITED NATIONS AS ECHEVERRIA DID.

20. BUT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S PROBLEMS PRIMARILY WILL BE DOMESTIC ONES THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED BY QUIXOTIC FOREIGN POLICY.

21. HE FACES A SURGING POPULATION WITH A GROWTH RATE OF 3.2 PERCENT ANNUALLY. THIS MEANS THAT MEXICO'S 60 MILLION PEOPLE WILL BE DOUBLED BY THE YEAR 2000 AND THERE ARE ALREADY 11 MILLION PEOPLE TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING IN THE CAPITAL ALONE.

22. IN AN ARID COUNTRY THAT DEPENDS SO HEAVILY ON AGRICULTURE, THE NEW PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO FIND NEW LAND RESOURCES THROUGH IRRIGATION, HYDROELECTRIC DAMS AND BY DIVERTING MORE AND MORE OF THE NATION'S ENERGY TO
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INDUSTRY.

23. WHETHER HE CAN OR WILL DO ANYTHING TO REDUCE THE POPULATION EXPANSION BEFORE IT REACHES A CRITICAL STAGE IS PROBLEMATIC. OFFICIALLY MEXICO IS A SECULAR STATE BUT MOST MEXICANS ARE DEVOUT CATHOLICS WHO RESIST FAMILY PLANNING SCHEMES OF ALL SORTS AND WHO PUT A PREMIUM ON LARGE FAMILIES.

24. MEXICO CITY IS ABLAZE WITH NEON SIGNS, BANNERS, FLAGS AND ALL THE OTHER TRAPPINGS OF A JOYOUS OCCASION ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL WHETHER THE DECORATIONS ARE DESIGNED FOR THE INAUGURATION OR FOR THE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING SEASON. MEXICAN TROOPS MADE SOME APPEARANCE ON THE STREETS IN FRONT OF KEY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN THE PAST 24 HOURS BUT THIS IS STANDARD AND THE MOOD IS JUBILANT BECAUSE OF THE CHANGE TAKING PLACE TODAY.

25. MRS. ROSALYNN CARTER MADE A BIG HIT AT A RECEPTION LAST NIGHT IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY BY UTTERING SEVERAL SENTENCES IN PAINFULLY MANGLED SPANISH, CLIMAXED BY HER DECLARATION THAT SHE WOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT SPEAKING THE

LANGUAGE BETTER WHEN SHE MOVES INTO THE WHITE HOUSE WITH
HER SPANISH-SPEAKING HUSBAND NEXT MONTH. ROBINSON

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